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ABSTRACT

The usefulness of the social class construct for life-cycle research is discussed in this paper. Social class is defined as used in the paper, and as it is generally used by students of the human life cycle. It is further evaluated as a descriptor, and a predictor of behaviors and attitudes. The construct seems to be most useful in studies of adults rather than children, and though it possesses important limitations as a predictor, it is the most pervasive of the group variables in its influence on behavior and attitudes. Social class and its relation to social structure, social distance, social mobility, social change, poverty, and conflict are also included. (Author/DM)

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SOCIAL CLASS PERSPECTIVES ON THE LIFE CYCLE

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The usefulness of the social class construct for life cycle research will be discussed in this paper. As a beginning, we will define social class as we will use the term, and as it is generally used by people interested in studies of the human life cycle.

A social class is a group of people who share a life style--a set of behaviors and attitudes that make them feel similar to others of the same class, and that are seen by people in other classes as distinctive. This is the meaning generally given to the term by social psychologists. It ignores the distinctions made by Max Weber between an economic class and a status or prestige group, and combines both of these concepts.

Our usage will not require us to take sides on the scientifically and practically important question whether a social class is a sub-culture(a community of people who have learned a life-style and are teaching this to their children) or simply a complex reaction of people to the socioeconomic situation in which they live. If a social class is a sub-culture, it has more permanence than if it is only situational. In the latter event, a change in socioeconomic situation, such as a basic annual family allowance designed to wipe out poverty, may obliterate the lower working class within the space of one generation. But if a social class is a sub-culture, change will proceed more slowly. In any case, the difference between the two is a matter of degree. There are situational elements and sub-cultural elements in every social class. For students of the life cycle it is difficult, if not impossible, to hold to one or the other position.

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Furthermore, we must consider the social class construct to represent a group of people without a clear-cut group boundary. There are always some people on the edge of one class and in effect members of two contiguous classes in the social structure. There are also some people right at the center of a given class, so to speak. They have a probability of 1 of belonging to this class, while those at the boundary between two classes have a probability of .5 of belonging to each of the two classes.

There is a real conceptual problem between the definition of a class as a group of people who are fully in that class and definitely not in any other class, and the definition of a class as a range of scores on a scale of socioeconomic status, with the mean of the scores sometimes taken to describe the class. Social scientists must live with this problem. If they opt for one solution or the other, they lose some of the value of the concept.

Social Class as a Description

Since a social class has its own characteristic life style, the term can be used as short-hand to describe a pattern of behavior and attitudes. This usage has been most convenient when referring to adults between the ages of 30 and 65. By the age of 30 most adults have found or created their life style and can generally be described in social-class terms. By the age of 65 they drop some of the marks of social class (such as occupation and associational membership) and the term loses some of its easy descriptive value. Before age 30, many children and youth are engaged in a process of social mobility, and their location in a given class is less certain. To put it another way, the variance of a given social class attribute is likely to be less during middle adulthood than before or after, and therefore the term can be used descriptively with a good deal of accuracy.

Social Class as a Prediction

For the social scientist, the concept of social class is likely to be most useful if it can be used to predict behavior and attitude. Then it is useful in the formulation and testing of hypotheses and in the design of a research study.

For predictive purposes, the discontinuous variable of social class is often replaced by the continuous variable of socioeconomic status (SES), which permite more satisfactory statistical analysis of data. Knowing the SES of a child or youth allows a more accurate prediction of the following than does any other single fact:

The intelligence quotient
The educational level that the individual will achieve
The occupational level that the individual will achieve
The individual's attitude toward work
The individual's age at his or her marriage

The number of children the individual will have
The sexual behavior of the individual
The kind of neurotic behavior the person will exhibit, if he suffers a neurosis.
The number of books the person will read during his lifetime.

We do not mean that the SES of an individual will predict every one of these characteristics better than any other fact that might be known about him will predict any one of the characteristics; but the SES is a better predictor of this whole array of behavior and attitude than is any other one fact. Therefore, if a social scientist studies any of these things, he is sure to study its relation to SES, among other variables. SES is probably the most widely-used predictor variable we have in the field of social science.

To learn as much as possible in an orderly way about almost any aspect of human behavior, the social scientist ordinarily starts by finding out how much of the variance is associated with SES, and then going on to study other variables that interact with the behavior in question.

Some qualitative indication of the use of the concept of social status and social stratification is given by a look at bibliographies. For example, the Social Science Research Council Inter-University Seminar on Social Status and Stratification put together a bibliography in 1951 which contained 750 items. Four hundred of these were published between 1940 and 1950. The twenty years since 1950 have seen a further expansion. The book of readings entitled Class, Status, and Power,* in its 1966 edition, contains 1,260 names of authors in the author index; and this comes from the 74 articles in the book, only a selection from the great volume of published work.

Social Class Through the Life Cycle

It might be thought that the social class concept is most ussful in studies of the socialization of children by the family, since the family is the principal carrier of life style. It might be thought that social class would have less value for studies of adult behavior. But, in fact, the reverse seems to be true.

Suppose we ask the question: At what age level is social class most effective in the prediction of human behavior, compared with:

Biological inheritence
Individual personality elements
Ethnic-racial group factors
Sex
Age
Religion
Intra-family factors, such as emotional relationships, husband-wife differences, number of children.

During the pre-natal life and the first 6 months after birth the predictive value of social class is minimal. The child is primarily a biological organism during this period. Insofar as socioeconomic status can predict the infant's characteristics the prediction will probably be based on the superior nutrition and medical care that higher status families get in some societies.

Kagan,* in his studies of infants, has reported some social class differences in social behavior by the age of 6 months, which he attributes to social class differences in mother-infant interaction.

From 6 months to 6 years of age the characteristics of children can be predicted with increasing assurance on the basis of the SES of their parents. Almost all of their socialization comes from the family during this period (except for recent attempts at intervention through pre-schools for lower-class children). Basil Bernstein* has studied the relation between social status and language development among young children in London, and has shown that the language to which the child is exposed in the family varies radically with the social status of the family. The significance of social class in parent-child relationships is summarized by Melvin Kohn as follows:*

> "The present analysis conceives the problem of social class and parent-child relationship as an instance of the more general problem of the effects of social structure upon behavior. It starts with the assumption that social class has proved to be so useful a concept because it refers to more than simply educational level, or occupation, or any of the large number of correlated variables. It is so useful because it captures the reality that the intricate interplay of all these variables creates different basic conditions of life at different levels of the social order. Members of different social classes, by virtue of enjoying (or suffering) different conditions of life, come to see the world differently--to develop

"different conceptions of social reality, different aspirations and hopes and fears, different conceptions of the desirable.

"The last is particularly important for present purposes, for from people's conceptions of the desirable--and particularly from their conceptions of what characteristics are desirable in children--one can discern their objectives in child-rearing. Thus, conceptions of the desirable--that is, values--become the key for this analysis, the bridge between position in the larger social structure and the behavior of the individual. The intent of the analysis is to trace the effects of social class position on parental values and the effects of values on behavior.

"Since this approach differs from analyses focused on social class differences in the use of particular child-rearing techniques, it will be necessary to reexamine earlier formulations from the present perspective. Then three questions will be discussed, bringing into consideration the limited available data that are relevant: What differences are there in the values held by parents of different social classes? What is there about the conditions of life distinctive of these classes that might explain the differences in their values? What consequences do these differences in values have for parents' relationships with their children? p.283.

From age 6 to 25 the individual is subjected to influences from family, school, peer group, church, work-place; and the influence of family social status is supplemented by influences from these other sources. These other sources are themselves expressions of social status, to some extent. That is, the nature of a child's school, peer group, religious group, are somewhat dependent upon his family's social class. But they do introduce other influences from other social class sources. Therefore the socioeconomic status of the individual's family is less accurately predictive of his various characteristics during his adolescence than during his middle childhood.

From age 25 to about age 75 social class influences again dominate the life of the individual. His life style is pretty much determined by his occupational status, his circle of friends, the associations he joins, the church he attends; and these are all elements of social class.

The evidence on the relationship of SES and adult behavior is impressive, and it is growing. Most of the research has been done with people past 45. As

an example, we may take the Kansas City Study of Adult Life, which studied a sample of men and women between the ages of 40 and 70. These people were interviewed, essentially about their life styles. Peterson and Neugarten* studied age-grading, and found that the characteristic ages of major events in adult life were closely tied to social class. When asked at what age a man is "in his prime," at what age he is "middle-aged," at what age he is "old," lower-class people respond with younger ages than do middle-class people. Havighurst* studied the role performance of people in the nine principal roles of adult life. With a pattern analysis of their role-performance scores, he found five patterns, each of which was characteristic of a particular social class or two contiguous classes.

In a small supplementary study with young adults in Kansas City, aged 25-30, Orr and Havighurst* found role-performance patterns that were differentiated by social class, though not as sharply as at middle age.

Marriage and divorce or separation are closely related to social class but also influenced by other factors that differ among different societies, according to Goode.*

If we stick to the definition of social class as a life-style, we are bound to see this as the dominant variable in any study of adult behavior. We will see the interaction of social class with a number of other group and individual factors, but social class will be the factor which appears to be logically and psychologically primary.

During the last phase of the life cycle, about age 75, we might expect social class to be less salient due to two characteristics of life in old age. One is the likelihood of chronic illness or of loss of physical vigor, which may change a person's life style in ways which he cannot control. The other is the tendency of older people to withdraw (voluntarily or under pressure) from a number of the active social roles of middle life, such as the roles of worker, association member, and citizen. It is these roles that are most differentiated by social status, in contrast with the roles of parent, grandparent, home-maker, which do not decrease in old age. Furthermore, if there is a tendency to disengage psychologically from the roles of middle age, as is claimed by proponents of the <u>disengagement theory</u>, this tendency might be expected to reduce the effectiveness of socioeconomic status as a predictor of behavior in old age.

Nevertheless, several studies of adjustment and of life style among elderly people indicate that social class is still a differentiating factor.

Research on social class in relation to the behavior of people over 65 and especially over 75 should be encouraged, to find out to what extent and for what kinds of people the social class dimension loses effectiveness in their behavior and attitudes.

What Does Social Class Leave Out? Although SES has great predictive value for behavior and attitudes from early childhood to old age, this prediction hardly ever extends beyond the level indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.5. Therefore a good deal more than half of the variance on the characteristics being measured is left to be accounted for by other factors. These factors are:

1. Individual variation in personality and person-social relations.
2. Ethnic or racial group characteristics. These may be styles of life that persist against the pressure of the social class in which one is located. Thus, Italian, Greek and Japanese-American adults have ethnic characteristics that separate them from other ethnic groups who are at the same SES level.
3. Religious group characteristics. Religious groups have their own religious and other behavior patterns and social attitudes, which overlay their social class characteristics.
4. Sex and age characteristics. Men are different from women, and the characteristic behaviors of certain ages are not clearly related to SES.
5. Occupational differences within a social class. As Miller and Swanson* have noted, there are substantial differences between entrepreneurial type of work and the bureaucratic type, which lead to different life styles at a given social class level.
6. Intra-family factors, such as place in the birth order, emotional relationships within the family, differences in social class origin of father and mother.

Important as these various factors are, it is clear that none of the group variables is as pervasive in its influence on behavior and attitude as social class.

Social Class and Socialization in Childhood

Children are trained for a particular social class life style by their families through processes which are more like absorption than instruction. That is, the child absorbs his attitudes and behavior from imitation of his parents and older siblings or he learns through the rewards and punishments that are part of the family situation. He is seldom instructed in a formal, conscious way.

Thus the trend of research on social class and socialization is away from the study of specific child-rearing practices, such as weaning, toilet-training and independence training, and toward the study of the "situation"--the daily routines of the home, the occupational demands on the personality of the parent, the husband-wife role relationships, the language environment provided by the family. Researchers who have contributed mainly to this trend are Bernstein,* Hess and Shipman,* and Miller and Swanson. Kohn has summed this up by using the concept of parental values which are class-related and which determine the parents' child-rearing behavior. He stresses especially the difference in values between middle-class parents and stable working-class (upper-lower class) parents. He says,*

> "The argument of this analysis is that class differences in parent-child relationships are a product of differences in parental values (with middle-class parents' values centering on self-direction and working-class parents' values on conformity to external proscriptions); these differences in values, in turn, stem from differences in the conditions of life of the various social classes (particularly occupational conditions--middle-class occupations requiring a greater degree of self-direction, working-class occupations, in larger measure, requiring that one follow explicit rules set down by someone in authority). Values, thus, form a bridge between social structure and behavior." (p.296)

Miller and Swanson* have introduced an intra-class variable into the discussion of child socialization, through their concept of two different "integration settings"--the entrepreneurial and the bureaucratic. Adults of various social classes may be involved in entrepreneurial or in bureaucratic work-situations, and the work-situation tends to determine the family's life style. The entrepreneurial and individuated home situation produces a certain kind of personality. "Children reared in individuated and entrepreneurial homes will be encouraged to be highly rational, to exercise great self-control, to be self-reliant and to assume an active, manipulative stance toward their environment." p.57. On the other hand, the bureaucratic job

gives the family the support of a large organization that provides stability of income and assurance of continuity and support through personal crises. They say, "Children reared in welfare-bureaucratic homes will be encouraged to be accommodative, to allow their impulses some spontaneous expression, and to seek direction from the organizational programs in which they participate." p.58

Zigler's summary and analysis of the relation of social class to the socialization process points to another line of research which indicates social class differences. He describes the "developmental" type of research which studies the development of mental and moral abilities and attitudes. The work of Piaget, Kohlberg and of Zigler, among others, indicates that the developmental progression of children in lower class homes is on the average slower and more limited than that of children in middle-class homes, and therefore social class comparisons of children at a given age tend to compare groups of children who are at different average developmental levels.

Social Structure and Social Class

The structure of a society consists of the groups that make up the society, arrayed in relation to each other so that one can understand the working of the society better by studying these groups and their interrelations. The groups that make up the society may be defined as occupational groups, or religious or racial groups, or income groups or groups defined by educational level, or as social classes.

Social classes have the advantage of including all of these groups in ways and proportions that are appropriate to the social status generally according to members of the group. However, social classes are defined differently by different researchers. This simply reflects the fact that a social class is a group of people occupying a certain range on a scale of social status, the range being determined by the person who defines the social class, so as to facilitate his particular research interests. Therefore we have almost as many social class structures of a society as we have major social scientists who are interested in the topic of social stratification.

W. L. Warner's social class categories have probably had the widest usage in the USA. His six classes have often been reduced to five, when the upper-upper and lower-upper classes are combined into a single upper class. The 5-class structure is generally used by people who are studying a cross-section of

American society. It ranges through upper, upper middle, lower middle, upper working class and lower working class. In less developed societies, a 4-class system is often found to be useful--upper, middle, upper working class, and lower working class.

The determination of the social class of an individual may be based on one or more of a number of status indices--such as occupation, income, source of income, house-type, area of the community in which the house is located, educational level, church, associations. Many studies are based upon occupational status alone, but this is a very crude measure of social status. The combination of occupation with amount of education is fairly easy to make, and gives a more secure base for assignment of social status. Another useful combination is occupation with house-type, but this requires an actual inspection of the person's home, which requires a visit to his neighborhood.

Changing Proportions of People in Various Social Classes. In the societies that are technologically developed there is generally an increasing proportion of people in the middle classes, due to the changing occupational structure, which increases the proportions of people in the professional and technical occupations, and decreases the proportions in unskilled labor. Thus the upper-middle class increases, and so does the lower-middle while the lower-working class decreases. This is important in studying social class in relation to the life cycle, since a person is born into a social structure that is rather different from the social structure in which he operates as a mature man or woman.

It is not at all clear what is happening to the relative size of the upper class. This group is not defined by occupation or by income, and therefore cannot be measured with the usual census data. Social scientists generally assume that about 3 percent of the members of North American society are upper class. Since they do not study the upper-class group, they tend to be ignorant of its size as well as most of its other characteristics.

Changing Social Distance Between Social Classes. The "social distance" between two social classes is a concept of some importance, though it is difficult to measure, in view of the fact that the socioeconomic indices used to measure socioeconomic status do not measure "social distance." Social distance is a concept that operates in people's behavior and in their attitudes,

but cannot be stated in terms of units on a scale of socioeconomic status. Therefore, the "distance" between upper-working class and lower-working class may be quite different from the "distance" that separates upper-working class from lower-middle class, even though the pairs of classes involved are contiguous.

The inter-class social distances which the social scientist knows most about are three--those between upper-middle and lower-middle, lower-middle and upper-lower, and upper-lower and lower-lower. It appears, now, that the distance between lower-middle and upper-lower is considerably less than the other two. This distance has grown less since World War II; so much less that there is considerable usefulness in the expression "common man level" which Warner and others have used to describe the lower-middle and upper-working classes together. They make up about two-thirds of the population. The average income of the upper-working class is probably as high as that of the lower white-collar class. Both groups expect their children to finish high school, though there is a considerable difference between the two in the proportions going to college. In studies of social mobility we shall probably find enough downward mobility to almost match the upward mobility between these two classes. The only study the writer knows of social mobility of a group who reached maturity since the war showed that the mobility between lower-middle and upper-lower classes was practically equal upward and downward, and these were the only two classes which were equal in this respect.*

For students of the differences between social classes, this matter of varying social distance has great importance. Unless it is attended to, studies purporting to compare middle-class with working-class persons may go wrong. If the middle-class sample is heavily lower-middle, while the working-class sample is heavily upper-lower, class differences will be minimized. This distinction is often overlooked in studies of children, where a "middle class" group of children is obtained from one school and a "lower class" group from another. Often the so-called lower-class group is almost entirely upper-lower, due to their greater numbers relative to lower-lowerw, their greater tendency to be at the appropriate age for a given grade level, and their more regular attendance at school. But this group will have minimal social distance from a vaguely defined "middle class" group. Class differences in such a study may be so small as to lead the researcher to say there are no significant differences, while another researcher, who takes pains to get an upper-middle class sample and a lower-lower class sample, finds large class differences.

Social Mobility

The nature and extent of social mobility is sometimes taken as an index of the quality of the society. A society with high upward mobility is thought to be a good society because it offers a relatively high degree of opportunity for upward mobility. But this proposition is too simple to be taken as the whole truth. Highly developed societies are likely to have less social mobility than societies which are undergoing rapid economic and technological development and therefore creating many new jobs at middle levels which may be filled by working-class people.

For the student of the human life cycle, the study of social mobility is a necessity, but he must recognize the fact that mobility is situational, and not an absolute good or evil. Societies in a state of rapid change are likely to have a relatively high degree of mobility. Very stable societies may have less mobility. For example, the contrast between Great Britain and the USA in the degree and nature of social mobility is a thing to keep in mind, especially by an American researcher who is inclined to see a high degree of upward mobility as necessarily a good thing for a society. The variations of mobility and stratification among different countries are described by Lipset and Bendix* and by S. M Miller,* and by Joseph Kahl.*

Social Class and Social Change

We have noted that the social class structure is not simply a static background against which an individual moves up or down or horizontally as he goes through life. The social structure is always changing in a modern society, and the social mobility of an individual person is made up of his movement in relation to a moving frame of reference.

It appears that some classes relate to social change more positively than others. In the democratic quasi-capitalist countries of the 19th and 20th centuries, it seems that the upper-middle class has been the principal agent of social change. The classes above and below are less susceptible to change, for a variety of reasons. David Riesman speaks of the lower-middle and upper-lower classes which "doze through history, fitfully yanked by a middle class on the rise. . . . If we try to locate time-orientations in terms of social class, we can say that the upper class has traditionally been oriented towards the past, while the middle class has been the future-oriented class, and the working class present oriented."* In the most recent time the upper-middle class has become somewhat less future-oriented because it has been the vanguard of the pervasive American value-change which stresses "humanistic" values and if other-oriented. "It is the middle class

"which first perceives social change, of a non-cataclysmic sort; it constitutes the nervous system of society, vulnerable to news and to what is new."

On the other hand, one would come to quite different conclusions about social class in relation to social change if one looked only at Russia of the 19th and 20th centuries. There it was not as much a single social class that led in the social changes, but a revolutionary minority from the middle and working classes.

In studying individuals through their life span we are likely to be interested in the changes in their values. Mobile individuals almost certainly will have different values from the class of their origin. But non-mobile individuals will probably change values during their lives as their social class changes its values, especially if they are upper-middle class. Also, some non-mobile individuals will resist the value changes of the social class, and will become unhappy with their social status, though they may not try to change it. Rather, they are likely to join with other like-minded people to form a sub-group within the social class which holds values different from those held by others in the same class. This situation is present in the upper-middle class today.

Social Class and Poverty

One of the unattempted studies which might be of great importance is a study of extreme poverty through the life cycle. What does it mean to young children, to school age children, to adolescents, to young, middle-aged or older adults to pass a lifetime in the lower-lower class? We have a few very good case studies, such as those of Oscar Lewis, which cover the life span by describing three-generation families. These are impressive, and they suggest that there is a style of life associated with deep poverty.

In the less-developed societies where there is a very large lower-lower class, there may be a widespread"culture of poverty." Even in the richest country in the world, it seems that some 10 percent of people live in a rather permanent poverty state, while another 10 percent manage to get their children out and up into the upper-lower class.

It appears, now, that we are about to place a floor under incomes in the USA, as has been done in western European countries, so that nobody is desperately poor. Will this change the life style of people now living in abject poverty so that they will rear their children differently? We need child development studies of the lower-lower class to answer this question. Possibly similar studies in Denmark and other North European countries will help to answer the question,

since they have had the experience of a floor under incomes for some time.

Social Class Around the World

If social science is to study the human life cycle comprehensively, it will seize the opportunity to study human behavior in a wide variety of cultural settings. This suggests comparative studies of social classes from various countries, as well as from various sections of one large country.

It is fair to ask whether we are "tooled up" for such studies. Do we know enough about social stratification in various societies? Do we have methods and instruments that can be used comparatively in various societies?

The answer appears to be affirmative to both questions. Kahl has reported on social stratification in Mexico, Japan, and Great Britain.* Havighurst and Moreira have reported on stratification in Brazil.* Hodge, Treiman, and Rossi* have demonstrated that occupations have very nearly the same prestige in many countries, and therefore one can use occupation as a principal datum in defining social classes and in studying social mobility in various countries. Inkeles has reported on social stratification in the Soviet Union,* and Bauman on social structure in Poland.*

A set of systematic comparisons of the upper-working class life styles, or the upper-middle class life style across several countries would be most useful just now, especially since it seems likely that upper-middle class life styles are about to change drastically.

Social Class and Conflict

The study of the relationship of social class to human development through the life cycle is a part of social psychology, and seems to be essential to the social psychologist. The tendency is to keep this as simple as possible by assuming that the class structure is a constant, almost unchanging thing, which serves as background for the socialization and for the social mobility of the individual.

But this ignores two important things about social classes, which have become especially significant to social scientists during the past decades. One is the fact of class warfare, or conflict between classes. Although social scientists have been aware of this as a fact, it has been pretty much ignored in research in the United States and in England, where it was tacitly assumed that the

society was a democracy of open classes and therefore class warfare would be minimal. But the political situation in the United States during the 1960s has produced a minority group among sociologists and psychologists who argue that class warfare is not only present but also is desirable for the improvement of American and British society and other so-called democratic societies. Therefore the conventional studies of socialization of persons into a social class and of individual social mobility from one class to another become irrelevant, or archaic.

The argument of Ivan Illich and his group (CIDOC) at Cuernavaca, Mexico, may be applied to the USA. This argument has been directed toward the class structure and the educational system of Latin America, and runs as follows: Latin America is dominated by a minority middle class which controls economic development for its own interests, and controls the political, educational and religious institutions so as to preserve and enhance its own interests against the interests of the underprivileged and exploited majority. Applied to education, this implies that "Latin America cannot afford the institution of universal, obligatory schooling which by its very nature excludes the lower class from equal educational opportunity and which, by virtue of its suppositions ensures chronic underdevelopment, understood as a state of consciousness. Educational reform is impossible. Schooling, defined by age-specific attendance and graded curriculum, must be abolished." (Report from the Centro Intercultural de Documentacion, Cuernavaca, in Latin American Research Review 5:159 (Summer, 1970)

This radical critique would be rejected by most Latin Americanists, but the same basic critique has been advanced against the "middle-class" institutions of the USA. Thus Colin Greer* has advanced the proposition that the lower class in the USA has never had a fair chance in the American school system. Lower class youth have been systematically pushed out of school, and school has not served to enhance their earning ability. He says, "The public schools have always failed the lower classes--both white and black. Current educational problems stem not from the fact that the schools have changed, but from the fact that they have continued to do precisely the job they have always done."

The second thing that needs to be considered in this connection is the difficult question (for American social scientists) of the relative "goodness" of the various social classes. There is a tendency to identify the middle class (or the upper-middle class) of a modern industrial society as the "best" in some vague and undefined sense. When this attribution extends to evaluation of such

institutions as schools, churches, business corporations, the middle class life style and organizational style tends to be taken as the social norm.

When this situation prevails, the people who find or place themselves in the role of social critics (for reasons of personal biography or of intense analysis of society), then begin to criticize the society because, they say, it is "middle-class dominated," and the term "middle class" becomes an epithet for their use. Schools are "middle class," teachers are "middle class," certain political parties are "middle class." And the middle class way of life is being "imposed on" people of other classes--especially on the working class.

When it develops that lower-class children and adults have difficulty in learning the skills, the technology, and the attitudes that would make them successful in earning a living and make them mobile into the middle class, the social scientists are caught on the horns of a dilemma. If they wish to apply their expertise to the betterment of people or society, they may persevere at the task of helping "disadvantaged" people to learn the things that will make them more competent participants in a modern industrial society. In this case they will be ciriticized by the social critics for trying to impose an alien way of life on people. Or, they may choose the other horn of the dilemma. They may say that the middle-class dominated society is a failure, and should be destroyed, so that a better society can take its place. They may say the middle-class life style is bad, materialistic, warlike, selfish, etc., and that the life-style of poor people, in one or another combination with an ethnic life-style, is better and should be valued positively in the schools and other institutions.

This situation places the social scientist in a difficult position, if he wants to make his work serve the society in an immediate practical way. He prefers a "value-free" social science, in which he studies to learn the truth and then reports the truth as he finds it. But if he takes this line, he is accused of being "the enemy" by the radical reformers. If he works for a society with a maximum freedom of choice for individuals to choose what they want from life and to have opportunity to get what they want if they work for it, he is accused by the radical reformers of supporting the status quo, with its inequities.

The social scientist studying the life cycle is especially vulnerable to criticism because he is likely to find developmental sequences going from the immature toward the mature, or from the underdeveloped toward the developed in societies and individuals, and to suggest that the more "mature" and the more

"developed" is better. For instance, he may find that children's moral development moves through stages toward more and more complex levels, and that middle-class children move more rapidly through the stages than do lower-class children. Then he is likely to search for ways of helping lower-class children move more rapidly toward maturity, but this may be interpreted as imposing middle-class values on lower-class children.

The controversies that may result from this kind of situation are somewhat similar to the controversy between Kingsley Davis* and Wilbert E. Moore* on the one hand, and Melvin Tumin,* on the other hand, over the goodness or badness of social stratification in a society. Moore and Davis find that societies with a class structure get their work done more efficiently (they have higher standards of living, etc.) than societies without a stratification system. They speak of a "universal necessity which calls forth stratification in any social system." Tumin states a number of propositions which he says summarize the Davis-Moore argument. The final concluding proposition is "Therefore social inequality among different strata in the amounts of scarce and desired goods, and the amounts of prestige and esteem which they receive, is both positively functional and inevitable in any society." Tumin argues against this proposition and says that it is hardly more than an elaborate rationalization, offered by the more fortunate members of a society, of the rightness of their occupancy of privileged positions. He argues that social stratification is dysfunctional in several ways.

A result of this controversy has been to make social scientists more conscious of the need to act as scientists in their studies of social stratification, and possibly a similar result may ensue from controversy over the relative goodness and badness of the various social classes as settings for human development through the life cycle.

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